

Commissioners of Cambridge Minutes, June 27, 2022

The City Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, June 27, 2022

Commission President Lajan Cephas opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Those present in person or virtually were Commissioners Brian Roche, Commissioner Jameson Harrington, Commissioner Sputty Cephas, Commissioner Chad Malkus, City Assistant Attorney Patrick Thomas, City Police Chief Mark Lewis, Fire Chief Adam Pritchett, and City Manager Tom Carroll. Citizens were able to observe the meeting by going on-line to TownHallStreams.com or to call in.

Commission President Lajan Cephas asked for a moment of silence for the youth in our community and the police department. Commissioner Sputty Cephas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion to accept the agenda was made by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The motion was approved 5-0.

Commission President Lajan Cephas welcomed Mrs. Donna Towers from Maryland Avenue to speak about the value of volunteers beautifying the city streetscapes. Mrs. Towers recognized the numerous hours many volunteers have given to our gateways, corridors, entranceways, and other public spaces. She thanked the City Council for all their hard work. She also noted that many of the volunteers had done their work for many years and that the City should develop a plan for not relying on volunteers but on having city crews carry on their work. President Lajan Cephas read the Citations to be given to Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Towers, Mr. & Mrs. Darrel Butch, Mr. & Mrs. Fred Howler and Mr. & Mrs. Carlos Estin. She thanked them all for volunteering over the years.

A motion was made by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Malkus to approve the consent agenda. The consent agenda included two special events and a letter of support as follows:

1. Jason Chance request for Firecracker Kids Triathlon on July 4, 2022, at the Dorchester County Family YMCA.
2. Sergio Martinez request for a Car / Bike Show on July 16, 2022, at 1001 Goodwill Ave. Location is fine, just concern for the noise ordinance for this event.
3. Letter for Support – Audubon NCRF Salt Marsh Restoration grant

The motion to approve the consent agenda was approved 5-0.

No ordinances were on the agenda for first reading.

City Attorney, Patrick Thomas, read the title of the ordinance Ordinance No. 1198 – An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland amending § 6.5.2(E) (Sign Programs) of the City’s Unified Development Code for the purpose of providing that the Planning Commission may approve a sign program that deviates from the strict interpretation of § 6.5 (Signs) thereof, subject to certain conditions; providing that the title of this ordinance shall be deemed a fair summary and generally relating to signage in the City of Cambridge.

Commissioner S. Cephas moved to open the public hearing, and this motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The motion was approved 5-0. Nobody from the public asked to speak.

Commissioner S. Cephas moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roche and approved 5-0.

Commission President Cephas recognized Mrs. Patricia Escher, City Planner. Mrs. Escher stated that the redevelopment of properties around the city was the focus on the amending of this ordinance. She stated businesses want to keep some aspects of their signs and this change enables that to occur. Commissioner Malkus moved to adopt Ordinance 1198, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner S. Cephas. Commissioners approved the ordinance by a vote of 5-0.

City Attorney, Patrick Thomas, read the title of Ordinance No. 1199 – An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland to adopt and approve the fiscal year 2023 Budget appropriating the necessary funds for the operation of the government and administration of the City of Cambridge for the period July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023.

Commissioner S. Cephas moved to open the public hearing and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus. Commissioners voted 5-0 to open the public hearing.

Mr. Carlos Estin addressed Council and stressed the need for funds for the Department of Public Works to hire more employees in that department.

Mrs. Cline of Somerset Avenue in Cambridge asked how much was going to support non-profit organizations in 2023 Budget. The city manager clarified that the City had received 30 applications for assistance totaling more than \$3.8 million. He added that between FY 22 and FY 23 the City was providing \$1 million for non-profits using ARPA Funds.

Ms. Ann Damianos of William Street asked about the funds going towards the Poplar Street pilot project. The city manager responded that there was no special designated amount for this project and the estimate was about \$16,000 to place barriers and change the stop lights to stop signs.

Mr. C.L. Rippons of Killarney Road asked how much the 2023 Budget was over the 2022 Budget in percentage? The city manager responded that the FY 23 Budget was approximately 25% more than the FY 22 budget because of ARPA and funds from the State of Maryland which are being invested in equipment and infrastructure in the City that have been neglected over the years. Mr. Rippons then asked a series of additional questions about the constant yield tax rate, how it was feasible to develop a budget that increased spending so significantly in six weeks, and other similar items.

Mr. Jermaine Anderson of Maryland Avenue spoke that the Non-Profits in the City really need the help and he thanked the City Council for all their hard work.

With no additional residents offering comments, Commissioner S. Cephas moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus and approved 5-0.

Commissioner Malkus moved that the budget be amended to include the city manager's recommended budget amendments, including the following:

- \$50,000 in FY 22 for the Spot Shooter program from ARPA funds from the undesignated \$5 million.
- A reserve of \$100,000 in FY 24 for community-oriented policing from ARPA funds from the undesignated \$5 million.
- \$200,00 in FY 23 for City Hall Stabilization from the undesignated fund balance in the General Fund.
- A reserve of \$200,000 in FY 24 for support of Cambridge Harbor from the \$500,000 in remaining ARPA funds set aside for economic development.
- \$25,00 in FY 23 for marketing support and research from ARPA for General Fund undesignated fund balance.
- A series of budget cuts detailed in the June 26, 2022 city manager memo and an increase in pay for PFCs in the CPD and employees making under \$40,000 per year.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roche. The motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Roche moved to set aside \$100,000 in FY 23 from ARPA for general traffic calming and safety improvements. Commissioner Malkus seconded the motion, and the vote passed 5-0.

Commissioner S. Cephas moved to adopt Ordinance 1199 as amended, and Commissioner Malkus seconded the motion. The ordinance was approved 5-0.

City Attorney, Patrick Thomas, read the title of Ordinance No. 1200, An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland to establish the Annual Tax Levy for the Real and Personal Property for fiscal year 2023 beginning July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner S. Cephas to open the public hearing and it was seconded by Commissioner Roche. The motion was approved 5-0. After nobody spoke for several minutes, Commissioner S. Cephas moved to close the public hearing. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus and approved 5-0. City Manager Tom Carroll spoke that the property taxes contemplated in FY 23 were the "constant yield tax rate" and would not increase any one's property taxes. A motion was made by Commissioner S. Cephas to adopt Ordinance 1200. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus and approved 5-0.

President Lajan Cephas, Ward 2, and Commissioner Sputty Cephas, Ward 4, both reclosed themselves from this ordinance reading, because of conflict of interest. The gavel was handed to Commissioner Roche to continue and Commission President Cephas and Commissioner S. Cephas left the chambers.

City Attorney, Patrick Thomas, read the title of the Ordinance No. 1201 – An Ordinance of the Commissioners of Cambridge, Maryland for the purposes of approving the purchase of certain real property owned by Chesapeake Court, LLC, located at 601 Chesapeake Court, described in a deed dated April 28, 2004 and recorded among the land records of Dorchester County, Maryland at liber M.L.B. No. 575, Folio 43, and shown on Dorchester County tax map 302, grid 10 as parcel 2579, with a tax account number of 07-142404 for the sum of \$537,500.00 and authorizing the President of the Commissioners and the City Manager, or such other city officials

as may be appropriate under the circumstances, to execute all documents and take any and all other action necessary to effectuate such purchase; providing that the title of this ordinance shall be deemed a fair summary and generally relating to the purchase of real property in the City of Cambridge.

A motion was made by Commissioner Malkus to open the public hearing it was seconded by Commissioner Harrington. The motion was approved 3-0.

Mr. C.L. Rippons of Killarney Rd asked if there were appraisals done on the property in question and how they came up with the price for this property? Planning Director Escher responded yes, there were two appraisals of \$600,000 and the other \$425,000 which were both given to the State of Maryland. The State of Maryland wants Cambridge to focus on the Revitalization of the Pine Street area and the State is the one that accepted the \$537,500 by grants to the City and we will pay \$25,000 and landfill tipping fees for this property. City Manager Tom Carroll added this property will be demolished and vacant until a use for the Pine Street Revitalization come to mind. Commissioner Malkus clarified that while he and his fellow commissioners had concerns about this purchase, he viewed it as in the best interest of the City and felt persuaded by the State of Maryland's recommendation to proceed and willingness to provide the lion's share of the funding. Discussion ensued.

Discussion having been exhausted, Commissioner Malkus moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harrington and approved 3-0. Next, Commissioner Harrington moved to adopt Ordinance 1201, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The ordinance was approved 3-0.

President Lajan Cephas and Commissioner Spotty Cephas returned to the meeting and the gavel was handed back to the Commission President.

There was no old or new business.

President Lajan Cephas then invited public comment.

Mr. Jermaine Anderson spoke that recently he received a violation notice and fine about the noise coming from his business in the Arts & Entertainment are of the city. There should be music in this area of town and asked who oversees the Arts & Entertainment area of the city.

Ms. JaVenna Myrieckes of Ocean Gateway spoke that she just opened the new Harriet's Ice Cream Shop, Cakes, and Candy at 428 Race St, and she also received a violation notice for music coming from her business.

Mr. Groove City of Cambridge spoke that there is a lot more African owned business in the city, and they plan to have a lot more. Their business runs with inviting music to help draw in the clientele.

Ms. Laurel Adkiss of High St welcomed the new City Manager. She spoke how the effect of the Poplar Street pilot project will affect the West End Area and the business in the area. She spoke and encouraged other residents and businesses to volunteer and not rely on the city to do all the beautification around the city. She encouraged other citizens to help pick up the litter in their

neighborhoods. Lastly, she asked if the position on the Traffic & Safety Committee was still open.

Mr. Charles Kilman of Cambridge spoke about his disapproval of the Poplar Street pilot project and how will affect his business. The closure of Poplar Street during COVID had an effect of his clients getting to him. The noise from the neighboring restaurant with all their doors open also effect his business. He will not renew his lease in the building if this project progresses.

There were no department or division head reports.

Mr. Carroll thanked Ms. Escher for her hard work with the State of Maryland and others on Ordinance 1201 property. Also, the city manager shared that staff from the Department of Public Works are working to develop plans for maintain the public spaces the volunteer group leaders had mentioned.

All Commissioners agreed that the city needs to work together in all areas of the city, with non-profits and volunteers. We need input from everyone to make this happen.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner S. Cephas and seconded by Commissioner Malkus. The motion was approved 5-0. President Cephas adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate account of the Council meeting Monday, June 27, 2022, insofar as I personally am aware.

Lajan Cephas

Commission President